WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A voice-responsive messaging system comprising:

a voice processing unit configured for recording a destination party identity and a destination address type, spoken by calling party, for a corresponding message;

a speech recognition unit for outputting data corresponding to identified words spoken by the calling party; and

a master control unit configured for generating a destination address query for an identified directory database in response to identification of the destination party identity and the destination address type by the speech recognition unit, wherein the master control unit, in response to receiving a destination address reply from the identified directory database, selectively initiates a transfer of the message to the destination party based on the destination address reply.

2. The system of claim 1, further comprising a signaling network interface for sending the destination address query to the identified directory database, and for receiving the destination address reply from the identified directory database, via an interoffice signaling network configured for exchanging data between the voice-responsive messaging system and the identified directory database.

3. The system of claim 2, further comprising:

a plurality of processing units, each configured for storing and processing a message for the calling party having a corresponding message type; and

a digital switching system for switching calls between an assigned Multi-Line Hunt Group and a selected one of the processing units, the master control unit selectively causing the digital switching system to establish a line-sided connection between the selected one processing unit and the calling party for retrieval of the message for the calling party.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein the selected one processing unit forwards the message to a destination address specified in the destination address reply in response to a forward command from the calling party.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein the selected one processing unit supplies the message to the destination address according to a corresponding message type protocol.

6. The system of claim 3, further comprising a local directory database for storing, for each subscriber of the voice-responsive messaging system, a destination party identity, a destination address, and a message type corresponding to the destination address.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein the local database stores a plurality of message types having respective destination addresses.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the message types include a voicemail message type, an e-mail message type, and a facsimile message type.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the processing units include a voicemail processing unit for processing the voicemail message types, and an e-mail processing unit for processing the e-mail message type.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein the e-mail processing unit is configured for processing the e-mail message type and the facsimile message type, the e-mail processing unit configured for converting messages between the e-mail message type and the facsimile message type.

11. The system of claim 6, further comprising a network interface configured for sending and receiving at least one of the destination address query and the second destination address query to the respective directory databases via a data network.

12. The system of claim 11, wherein the data network is the Internet.

13. The system of claim 11, wherein the master control unit outputs, via the data network, security information to at least one of the directory database and the second directory database in response to reception of a security inquiry from the corresponding directory database.

14. The system of claim 3, wherein at least one of the processing units includes a network interface for communication with a packet switched network.

~~14. The system of claim 1, wherein the master control unit is configured for initiating a second destination address query for a second identified directory database in response to the destination address reply from the identified directory database.~~

15. A telecommunications network comprising:

a central office switching system configured for receiving a line-sided connection with a calling party;

a unified message platform system comprising a speech recognition unit for identifying a destination party identity and a destination address type based on

respective speech samples supplied by the calling party via the line-sided connection, the unified message platform outputting a destination address query based on the destination party identity and the destination address type;

a directory database for storing destination addresses for respective destination parties based on destination address type, the directory database generating a directory response based on reception of the destination address query; and

a data network for transporting the destination address query and the directory response between the unified message platform system and the directory database according to a prescribed data network protocol.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein the directory database selectively supplies one of an identified destination address and a null result in the directory response in based on executing the destination address query.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the unified message platform system selectively sends a message, selected by the calling party, to the identified destination address in response to reception of the corresponding directory response.

18. The system of claim 17, wherein the destination address query and the directory response are each transported via the data network as TCAP query and TCAP response messages, respectively.

19. The system of claim 17, wherein the destination address query and the directory response are each transported via the data network according to TCP/IP protocol.

20. The system of claim 15, wherein the unified message platform system further includes:

a local directory database for storing, for each subscriber of the unified message platform system, a destination party identity, a destination address, and a message type corresponding to the destination address; and

a master control unit configured for outputting the destination address query to the directory database via the data network based on a detected absence of the destination party identity in the local directory database.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein the unified message platform system further includes a plurality of processing units, each configured for storing and processing a message for each said subscriber according to a corresponding subscriber destination address and according to a corresponding message type.

22. The system of claim 21, wherein the master control unit sends a message selected by the calling

party from the corresponding processing unit to the destination address corresponding to the destination party identity.

23. The system of claim 21, wherein one of the processing units supplies a destination address retrieved from the directory response based on the corresponding message type.

24. A method in a switched communications network, the method comprising:

connecting a calling party via a line-sided connection to an originating central office switching system serving the calling party;

processing speech samples spoken by the calling party on the line-sided connection to identify a destination party and a destination address type, the destination address type corresponding to a destination address to be utilized by the calling party for access to the destination party; and

accessing a directory database via a data network for retrieval of the destination address corresponding to the destination party and the destination address type.

25. The method of claim 24, further comprising forwarding a message to a destination system corresponding to the destination address according to a data protocol corresponding to the destination address type.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising determining an identifier for the directory database, the accessing step including accessing the directory database based on the corresponding identifier.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the identifier corresponds to at least one of a personal directory for the calling party, a public directory having a listing for the destination party, and a private directory serving the destination party.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the private directory corresponds to one of a corporate directory listing the destination party as an employee, and a subscriber directory listing the destination party as a subscriber.

29. The method of claim 26, wherein the determining step comprises:

identifying a destination directory database based on identification for speech samples spoken by the calling party on the line-sided connection;

accessing a database for retrieval of a network address for the destination directory database, the step of accessing the directory database including accessing the directory database based on the network address retrieved from the database.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the step of identifying the destination directory database includes selecting from a group of available directories.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the group of available directories includes a personal directory stored on a personal computer, a public directory, a corporate employee directory, an e-mail address directory, and a mailing address directory.

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32. The method of claim 24, wherein the accessing step includes sending a TCAP-formatted query message requesting the destination address.

33. The method of claim 24, wherein the accessing step includes sending a TCP/IP formatted message carrying a database query requesting the destination address.

34. A telecommunications network comprising:

a central office switching system configured for receiving a line-sided connection with a calling party; and

a unified message platform system comprising:

(1) a speech recognition unit for identifying a destination party and a destination address type from respective speech inputs provided by the calling party via the line-sided connection, and

(2) a directory access system for accessing destination address information for the destination party based on the corresponding destination address type, the unified message platform configured for forwarding a recorded message based on accessing the destination address information for the corresponding destination address type.

35. The network of claim 34, wherein the directory access system includes a master control unit configured for generating a destination address query for an identified directory database in response to identification of the destination party and the destination address type by the speech recognition unit, wherein the master control unit, in response to receiving a destination address reply from the identified directory database, selectively initiates a transfer of a message to the destination party based on the destination address reply.

36. The system of claim 35, further comprising a signaling network for transporting signaling messages, the directory access system comprising a signaling network interface for sending the destination address query to the identified directory database, and for receiving the destination address reply from the identified directory database, via an interoffice signaling network configured for exchanging data between the voice-responsive messaging system and the identified directory database.

37. The system of claim 36, wherein the unified message platform system further comprises:

a plurality of processing units, each configured for storing and processing a message for the calling party having a corresponding destination address type; and

a digital switching system for switching calls between an assigned Multi-Line Hunt Group connected to the central office switching system and a selected one of the processing units, the master control unit selectively causing the digital switching system to establish a line-sided connection between the selected one processing unit and the calling party for retrieval of the message for the calling party.

38. The system of claim 37, wherein the selected one processing unit forwards the message to a destination address specified in the destination address reply in response to a forward command from the calling party.

39. The system of claim 38, wherein the selected one processing unit supplies the message to the destination address according to a corresponding destination address type protocol.

40. The system of claim 38, further comprising a local directory database for storing, for each subscriber of the voice-responsive messaging system, a destination party identity, a destination address, and a destination address type corresponding to the destination address.

41. The system of claim 40, wherein the local database stores a plurality of destination address types having respective destination addresses.

42. The system of claim 41, wherein the destination address types include a voicemail destination address type, an e-mail destination address type, and a facsimile destination address type.